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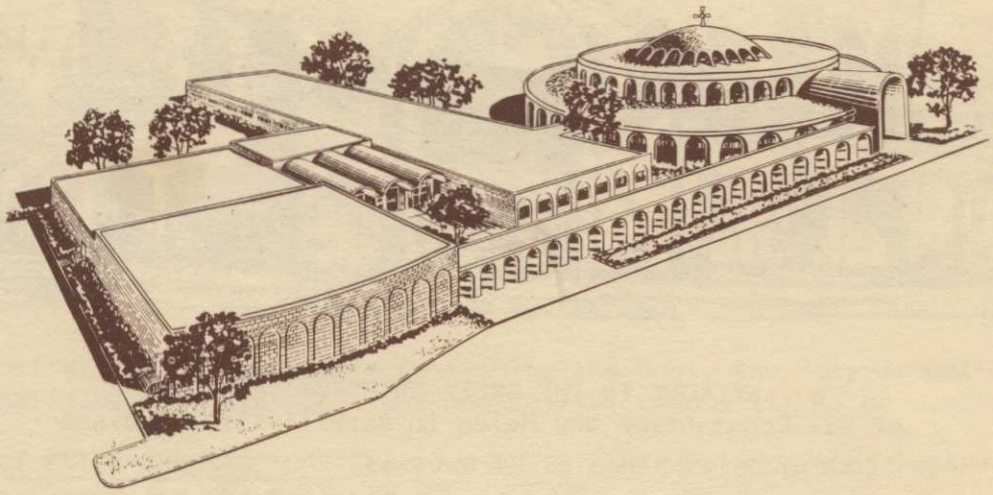

Welcome to the

SS. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral

MERRILLVILLE, INDIANA

WELCOME TO THE GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
of SS. Constantine and Helen in Merrillville, Indiana

You are now entering the only Greek Orthodox Cathedral in the State of Indiana, so proclaimed by His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos, head of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America, on May 20, 1976. This was done "in recognition of the devotion to the Greek Orthodox Faith and Church of the most respected Greek Immigrants who, in the city of Gary in the State of Indiana, established the first Greek Orthodox Community (in 1912) and erected a Church in honor of SS. Constantine and Helen, and in recognition of the piety of those who have continued in their footsteps by erecting a beautiful new Church in Merrillville."

This is the house of worship of the 1,300 families of Americans of Greek descent who live in Gary, Merrillville, Crown Point, Valparaiso, Griffith, Portage, Lake Station, Hobart and surrounding towns and villages, and grew to this number and to this level through hard work and perservance from 10 Greek families in 1912. It is their second house of worship, the first one being a beautiful Byzantine Church at 13th and Jackson in Gary, now serving as the house of worship for the Koinonia Missionary Baptist Church.

The Cathedral is a 100-foot diameter Rotunda whose architecture dates to pre-Christian years. It is 56 feet tall to the top of the Cross on the gold dome and seats 766 on the main floor, 136 on the Balcony and 25 in the Cry Room for a total seating in the Cathedral proper of 927. Another 136 can be seated in the Chapel which is entered from the west end of the building. It is equipped with a permanent baptismal font and is used for baptisms, small weddings, funerals and weekday services. This makes the total seating capacity of the Cathedral 1,063.

The first area, as you enter the Cathedral, is known as the PRONAOS (FORE-NAVE), which leads to the second section called NARTHEX where two candle stands and two shrines--that of the Virgin Mary on the north and SS. Constantine and Helen on the south--are located. As the Orthodox custom goes, you may make your donation with which you can purchase a candle, light it, stand it in the sand box, pay your respects to the person portrayed on the icon, and pray for your loved ones both living and departed. Against the south wall of the Narthex you see the ornately carved Holy Sepulchre depicting the Tomb of the Lord and decorated on Holy Friday every year for the symbolic burial of Christ. Visit the bride's room to your left and the cry room to your right and the balcony above you. Then please enter the main Nave and move freely about as far as the SOLEAS, the raised platform where the sacraments and other Holy Services take place. On the south side of the Soleas

you see the beautiful pulpit and on the north the Bishop's Throne and the Chanter's seats and reading stand. At the west end of the Soleas stands the ICONOSTAS, which separates the Nave from the Sanctuary. All these appointments are made of rich Red Oak by the Ossit Church Furniture Company of Janesville, Wisconsin. The Iconostas bears the icons of Christ, the Virgin, John the Baptist, SS. Constantine and Helen, St. Paul and St. Nektarios. The opening at the center of the Iconostas is called the Holy Gate and it is used strictly by the clergy. The two other gates at the north and south bearing the Archangels Michael and Gabriel are used by both the clergy and the Acolytes (Altar Boys). In the center of the Sanctuary one may see the Holy Altar which symbolizes both the Throne of God as well as the Tomb of Christ, on which the Divine Liturgy is celebrated every Sunday and Holy Day. It is made of a heavy slab of travertine marble resting on five brass and mosaic columns symbolizing Christ (in the middle) surrounded by the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It was made by the Daprato-Rigali Studio of Chicago.

On the Holy Altar is the Tabernacle containing the Host, the Holy Gospel Book resting on the ANTIMINS, the eternal light and several candle sticks or candlelabras.

Please DO NOT ENTER THE SANCTUARY because it is consecrated ground reserved for the Orthodox Clergy and the Acolytes.

The main apse behind the Altar is covered with mosaics depicting an enthroned Madonna with Child known as "THE PLATYTERA" (wider than the heavens). The two niches to the north and south are known as "PROTHESES" or tables of oblation. Their mosaics depict the Nativity on the south and the Utter Humility on the north. The exquisite Byzantine mosaic work was done by Mr. Robert Andrews of Hingham, Massachusetts. The area above and around the Platytera will be covered with Mosaic Medallions of the four Evangelists and the twelve Apostles, two angels and the Holy Trinity portrayed by the Hospitality of Abraham. At the foot of the Platytera stands a large Crucifix and to its left and right two HEXAPTERYGA (processionals) and a silver Crucifix. Next to the south table of oblations hangs the censer on the censer stand.

The Cathedral has 20 large windows in the nave (roughly 8 x 14 feet) and five more in the Chapel, to be fitted with stained glass at the cost of $4,000 each by Rohlf's Stained and Leaded Glass, Inc., of New York City. The ten on the north side depict Fathers of the Church: St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Nicholas of Myra, St. Spyridon of Cyprus, St. Basil of Cappadocia, St. Gregory the Theologian of Nanzianzus, St. John Chrysostom, Empress Theodora of Constantinople and one more to be selected by the donor. The other nine have already been donated. The ten stained glass windows on the south side depict martyrs of the Church: St. Stephen the first martyr, St. Eleftherios, St. Haralambos, Ste. Katherine, Ste. Anastasia, St. George, St. Demetrios, SS. Theodores (Tiron and the General), Ste. Irene and St. Panteleimon. The huge window over the main entrance already fitted with stained glass at a cost of $12,000 depicts the patron saints of the Cathedral, St. Constantine the Great, founder and Emperor of Constantinople, who issued the edict of toleration of Milan in 311 A.D., and his Queen Mother Helen.

Another small transom window over the choir loft passage way separating the 10 north windows from the 10 south windows will depict, in stained glass, the Holy Spirit as the key to the life and activity of the Church.

There are sixteen smaller windows in the dome which will also be fitted with stained glass bearing Christian symbols at the cost of $1,250 each.

(over)

The inside of the dome will be covered with a large mosaic depicting Christ as "PANTOCRATOR" (holder of the Universe), and the inside of the ring will have eight Prophets in mosaics.

Beginning with the center of the face of the balcony and proceeding south and westward under the windows, a series of mosaic panels with scenes from the life of Christ will be installed leading to the large concavity at the southwest corner where the Crucifixion will be portrayed. The story of the life of Christ will resume on the large northwest concavity with the Resurrection and continue under the windows with scenes after the Resurrection until we come to the middle of the face of the balcony--where we began--to a Chi-Rho, Alpha-Omega Symbol.

You may exit now from either the north or the south exit and walk under the portico to the west entrance through which you enter the beautiful Chapel of SS. Nicholas and Theodora. It seats 136, it is equipped with a fixed baptismal font, a small organ and a smaller bride's room. It is used for all baptisms and any Liturgy or other service when the crowd is small. It is beautifully decorated with true Byzantine murals created by the famous iconographer Mr. John Terzes of Greece and Chicago. The murals portray the Baptism of Christ in the center apse, Christ and the Virgin in the two niches. SS. Nicholas and Spyridon next to the south niche, Stes. Theodora and Markella next to the north niche; the Preparation of the Throne above the apse; the Temptation of Christ to its left; the Calling of the Apostles to its right; the Wedding at Cana, the Deisis and the Good Shepherd on the north wall; and The Sermon on the Mount, Christ and the Children and Christ knocking at the Door on the south wall. The five large windows will portray latter day saints of the Church in stained glass; SS. Nektarios of Aegina, Cosmas of Aetolia, Dionysius of Dakynthos (Zante), Gerasimos of Cephalonia and Nicodemus of Mt. Athos.

This House of God was started on August 18, 1974, and the first service was held in it on Thanksgiving Day, 1975, exactly four years after the opening of the Cultural Center on Thanksgiving Day 1971. The cost of the land (37 acres) was $200,000; the cost of the Cultural Center (unfurnished) $650,000; and the cost of the Cathedral (unfurnished) $850,000. When everything is completed this Complex will have cost $2,500,000.

Thank you very much for visiting the Cathedral and please feel free to attend our worship services any Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

If you want to arrange for a group tour please call 769-2481. The Cathedral address is 8000 Madison Street, Merrillville, Indiana 46410.

The Dean of the Cathedral is Father Evagoras Constantinides. The associate pastor is Father James Gordon, the President of the Parish is Mr. Spiro Cappony, and the Chairman of the Building Committee is Mr. James E. Mammas.